

## The Life of Samson #2

*2001 Family Conference*

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**Bible Text:** Judges 13:1-16:31

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I ask that you turn with me to Judges 14 and as I, once again, read this section of God's word, I want to remind you that I do not have the time during these sessions to be exhaustive in regard to detail in the life of Samson and so I want to read these chapters so that we can get the entire sweep of his life. I'm going to be dealing today with elements from chapters 14, 15 and 16 but, again, I'm trusting that there is an overall familiarity that you have with the life of Samson.

Judges 14,

“1 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.'

“3 Then his father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?' And Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, for she pleases me well.'

“4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord - that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

“5 So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. 6 And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

“7 Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. 8 After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and

honey were in the carcass of the lion. 9 He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

“10 So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so. 11 And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

“12 Then Samson said to them, 'Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing.’”

Let me just stop and say here that that's kind of equivalent to saying, “I'm going to go down to JCPenney and buy 30 suits for you.” That's something of the cost that we need to think of in mind, 30 - \$200-300 suits and it kind of adds up.

“13 'But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing.' And they said to him, 'Pose your riddle, that we may hear it.'

“14 So he said to them: 'Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet.' Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.

“15 But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, 'Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?'

“16 Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, 'You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me.' And he said to her, 'Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?' 17 Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. 18 So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: 'What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?' And he said to them: 'If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!'

“19 Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his

anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. 20 And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.”

Let's once again pray and ask God's help as we look into his word this morning.

*Our Father, we do pray that as we have held before us once again the life of this man and particularly as we focus upon his own careless disregard for his soul we pray, living God, that you would write the lessons of this man's life large upon our hearts. Father, may it be that this man's life will serve as a warning to your own children that we might be kept back from the kinds of sins that worked such ruin upon this man. Help us unto that end, living God, that we might be soldiers of the cross, united in faith to Jesus, filled with his Spirit, shining as lights. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

A part of the life of any pastor means that eventually he's going to have to do a funeral. Now, funerals can be relatively easy when you are dealing with people that you know. I say relatively easy, I mean at least in regard when you know the person is either a believer or an unbeliever, at least you know where you stand and you can either preach with great hope or else you might preach with great care and evangelistically when you do not believe that that person was a Christian. But then, you may occasionally as a pastor be asked to do a funeral for someone and you do not know where they are. You do not know whether they are in heaven or in hell and you can begin an argument with yourself or with someone else as you try to determine the eternal destiny of this one who has died. You line up the arguments on the one side, “Well, they did profess faith and I know that they were baptized and I know for a period of years that they were faithful in church.” Then on the other side, “Well, yeah, but they were also pretty worldly and the guy did die in a drunk driving accident.” So, exactly where are you going to put this particular one? I've wondered to myself if I was asked on that day that that Philistine temple fell upon Samson and his relatives came and said to me, “Brother, would you do Samson's funeral?” Well, how easy a funeral would that be? Where is Samson? Would I give a message of hope that Samson was a man that knew and loved the living God and I could say with certainty, “Brethren, rejoice. We will one day see Samson again.” Or would I stand up there and say, “Samson's life serves as a warning to us that you could be living among the people of God, that you could be circumcised and yet you can end your life in hell.” Or would I be wrestling in my mind. Well, I tell you, largely I would be wrestling in my mind. I would wonder, “Is Samson one who was united to Christ, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world or did he live and die in union with Adam?”

Just for a moment, line up the arguments on both sides of the case: someone might say, “Well, he must've been a believer. The fact that the Spirit of God came upon him mightily,” twice we read about that in the chapter that we've just read, literally, the Spirit of God rushed down upon him. We say that he must have been a believer. Ah, but some other theologian says, “Oh no, no, no. That's not necessarily any proof of a regenerate heart. Did not Jesus himself teach that there would be those who would work many wonders in his name and yet Jesus would say to them, Depart from me for I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness.” But someone else says again, “Well, was he not a Nazirite? Was not the whole of his life consecrated to God?” And someone else will

counter, “Yes, but God says that faith without works is dead.” And someone else brings out those well-known words that, “Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.” Is it not true that with regeneration comes newness of life? Have we not heard several times this week already those well-known words of 2 Corinthians 5:17 that “if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation, old things have passed away and behold new things have come”?

Where do I stand? I want to tip the scales a bit this morning in one particular direction and I know that there may well be those here today who are going to disagree with me and say, “I believe Samson is an unregenerate man. He's an ungodly man. How could you read the Bible and come to any other conclusion?” But I want to give several reasons why I believe Samson was a believer, albeit a weak believer and then I want to give several reasons and then focus the majority of our time today upon a final reason. The first reason why I would say that I believe Samson was despite all of his sins, a man that did know God in a saving way is that Samson is listed among the great ones of faith in Hebrews 11. I think you've known the experience sometimes of reading through your Bible and coming to a conclusion about a man or a woman based upon what you read in the Old Testament and then you come to the New Testament in which some additional light is put upon that person and perhaps you're surprised. For instance, when you read the account in Genesis of the life of Lot, how many of you would come to the conclusion that Peter does that Lot was righteous Lot whose soul was vexed living in the land that he did? You read Genesis and you think, “This guy is a wicked, drunk, incestuous man. There is no way he is a believer.” But God says, “No, he is righteous Lot.” Likewise, we read in Hebrews 11 these words, verse 32, “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me,” and you don't want to be irritated with the Spirit of God ever but you wish, “Couldn't you elaborate on this just a little bit to tell us a little more about this?” He says, “Time fails me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Several of those could certainly have reference to Samson: Samson stopped the mouths of lions; Samson escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness Samson was made strong; he was valiant in battle and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. And how did he do it? Well, the word of God tells us that he did so by faith, that is how Samson did what he did.

Another important issue that I would place upon the scale to tip it in this one direction is the realization that in these four chapters of Judges, we are given only a tiny slice of this man's life. He lives to be probably around 40 years old but we are only given a window into a few days in those 40 years. Now, friends, I don't know about you, but I can certainly say of myself that if God chose to highlight only 6-7 days of my life, I could either come across as a demon or else you'd think I was an angel who never sinned depending on which 6-7 days of my life God chose to highlight. If a biographer was writing about me and they said, “I'm just going to give you of this guy's 38 years, four days from July 2-6 of the year 2001 and it's all going to be filled with how he preached at a family conference and did this and did that.” Somebody might say, “Well, that guy

must've really been something.” Well, I can tell you, if you took 5, 6, 7, 8 other days of my life and a lot more than that, you would have a very different picture indeed.

But there is also the biblical realization that I trust every child of God and I know every child of God can relate to and that is that the writer of Hebrews lets us know that in the life of every believer that there are what are called sin which so easily entangle us. Whenever you read that in the word of God, I imagine if you're anything like me, that there are going to be certain things that are going to leap to your mind so that when he says, “Lay aside the sin which so easily entangles you,” you're thinking, “Well, this is a sin that entangles me and that's a sin that entangles me and this is a sin that entangles me.” Pastor Donnelly alluded last night to the fact that you could look at the lives of certain people and become very depressed. You read certain Christian biographies and you get the impression that these men and women, they never sinned, never struggled, never wavered, never doubted, they were never carnal. Again, you just want to give up when you read about it. You read about this saint and it makes you doubt your salvation. Somehow they managed to pray 30 hours a day and you think, “How did they do that?” You know, they witnessed to 300 people a week, wrote 5,000 letters of encouragement every month, they built 90 orphanages a year and then they die at 30. You think, “How did they do that?”

Again, it's not realistic. It's not the whole picture. The reality of every true child of God is that they can enter into the experience that Paul has in Romans 7 where he evaluates the contradictory mess that his life at times was and he cries out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” I bless God for the honesty of Romans 7. If it weren't for Romans 7, there are times I would have given up. I thank God for the honesty of words like the words we read yesterday from the Apostle Peter where he speaks that there is lust which wages war against the soul. In other words, he's recognizing that the Christian life, that a determination to live a life that's pleasing to God is not a cakewalk, that there are struggles and that there are battles. The epistles are full of commandments for Christians, godly people in Christ, to turn from sin and to put sin to death. I ask you, if those sins could never ever be a part of a true child of God, why are church members told to stop doing them? If no Christian could ever be angry, never speak an unedifying word, why in the world are those words in the Bible?

I tell new believers that they need to understand that there is a sense in which when the Lord Jesus saves us, we join an army as we sang of this morning and we get dropped behind enemy lines in the midst of a hot battle. Now, I encourage them to tell them that we are equipped to fight that fight and to win that battle and that we will ultimately win and that we can fight that battle with joy unspeakable but that it is a battle nonetheless, so that Paul can say that the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit wages war against the flesh. These two are contrary, the one to the other, so that you do not do the things that you wish. It is this understanding of the Christian life that is behind well-known words and certain hymns. Words like these,

“Prone to wander, Lord I feel it.  
Prone to leave the God I love.”

Or,

“Tempted, tried and sometimes failing.”

I sometimes want to change that word to always or a whole lot of the time failing. But you know what I’m saying, do you not? If we're honest that when we pick out these few days of Samson's life and we find him doing this which is stupid and that which is stupid, there is a sense in which we can enter into that.

Furthermore, we need to remember the day and age in which this man lived. Samson, as we saw yesterday, does not live in a day in which there is a godly king. He does not live in a time of religious revival and fervor. Most likely, Samson's life, at least at the end of it, overlaps the life of Samuel so that the priest in that day is Eli and perhaps the underling priests are Hophni and Phineas, not exactly the best religious leaders in the world. In fact, we read concerning these days and we'll come to this tomorrow in the Scripture reading in Judges 15:11-12, when Samson begins to deliver Israel from the Philistines, the people come and complain about it. They say, “What are you doing? Don't you know that they're our masters? Why are you stirring up all of this problem?” In other words, they were happy and content with things the way that they were. Samson is not a man who lived under sound instruction surrounded by godly men and women who were committed to loving him and to doing good. Jesus himself tells us that there is a correlation between the temperature of our generation and the effect that it has upon the soul. Jesus says in Matthew 24:12, “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”

I read recently about what hypothermia does to the body. Young people, if you're not familiar with that term, that's what happens when someone freezes and usually eventually freezes to death. What will happen when someone begins to get cold, of course, and you know what this is like if you've ever been cold, you begin to shiver. Your body is shivering and shaking in that it is fighting its climate; it is trying to maintain a certain temperature by that vigorous activity of shaking. That's what your body is trying to do but eventually in hypothermia, you get worn out. All of that shaking wears your body out so that your temperature eventually becomes like the temperature around you and Jesus said that can happen when lawlessness abounds around you, that you can be shaking trying to maintain fervent love in the midst of lawlessness but that love can grow cold.

Again, Samson did not have the blessings that many of us take for granted: he did not have a completed Bible; he did not have faithful pastoral oversight; he did not have godly friends that were an encouragement to him. His, again, was the day when there was no king in the land and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Now, I want to focus in the time that remains, upon another line of argument in favor of viewing Samson as a converted man and I want to deal with this by way of encouragement and by way of warning this morning. But before I do that, let me give here a word of application and that is simply to say this: my friends, we ought not to live in such a way that if we were to die right now people would have to have this kind of debate about us. You know, if they

told me, “Hey, brother, Paul got beheaded. Could you do Paul's funeral?” Man, no problem. John the Baptist's funeral? No problem. Samson's? Well, let's think about this. Let us so live – in a sense I want to say one way or the other because Elijah said, “Stop hesitating between two opinions. If the Lord is God, follow him. If Baal is god, follow him.” Let it be known where you live. Let us know. But now I want to bring out, again, this final point by way of encouragement. What I want to bring out this morning now are four things. I want to bring out first of all: Samson's careless disregard for his own soul. Secondly, and this is what I want to focus on by way of encouragement, is God's merciful intervention. Thirdly, Samson's persistence. Finally, Samson's ruin, at least his temporary ruin.

Let's consider first of all this morning Samson's careless disregard for his own soul. I imagine that a text that many of you have memorized is Proverbs 4:23. It's one of those Reformed texts and Reformed Baptist preachers, all of them, seem to mention it from time to time and that is that verse that says, “Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life.” That word “keep” as many of you are aware means “to guard” or “to act as a watchman.” Your heart is a very precious commodity and you need to be on the alert in regard to your heart and it is obvious even to the casual observer that at least in certain seasons of his life, Samson was not diligent in the keeping of his own heart. At least at certain seasons of his life, the seasons that are listed here in Judges 13-16, he did not in the words of Paul, walk circumspectly redeeming the time because the days were evil. He did not go about in a wicked and seductive world with the thought that his own heart was susceptible to being led astray and that he could be spiritually ruined. He was, as we're going to see more fully tomorrow, a man that grew and again I'll say, at certain seasons in his life he was a man who was spiritually cocky and arrogant. “Others might not be able to flirt with the world and get away with it, others might get in trouble if they do that but I'm strong enough to handle it.”

Let me give to you now several examples of Samson's careless disregard for his own soul. First of all, it is seen in what we read this morning in his desire for a Philistine wife. He sees there a woman of Timnah located about six miles away from his home. Both of them are in these border communities. Samson is living very close to the Philistines and he sees this woman there. No doubt, he is fraternizing with the Philistines; some of them are probably his buddies. Maybe one day he sees this woman and she's really nice looking and he says to his friend, “Hey, who is that over there?” And they tell him her name and he goes over and starts to talk to her and she is pleasant in his sight. She looks good to him. She's hot and he likes her and so it is that he wants to be with her, he wants to marry her. Again, we find here that this is an example of one being drawn away by what John calls the lust of the eyes. Had he studied the law of God which was available to him and perhaps he did and was disregarding it, he would have known that such thoughts were strictly forbidden by God. Deuteronomy 7:2, we read there that “When the Lord your God delivers these other people over to you, that you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following

Me, to serve other gods.” That's what God says is going to happen if you marry someone like that; God says it will turn your heart away.

Samson, no doubt, is thinking, “Oh no, it won't. I can marry someone like that and still be a zealous Nazirite. I can still be consecrated to God. Yes, I know God says it's dangerous. I know God says it will turn my heart away but I don't really believe that.” I think those words are fairly clear in Deuteronomy 7. You don't have to be a Hebrew scholar to figure those words out. I, every once in a while when I'm talking with someone and I quote the word of God and you can tell it really bothers them what that text says and they say something like, “Well, I'd like to hear what the original language says.” Normally, you're able to say, “The original language says exactly what the English says.” You don't have to be a scholar to figure that out. And God gives the same warning in the New Testament and you all know these words: we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. What fellowship is there between light and darkness, Christ and Belial? You are not to be joined together with someone who is not a believer. It is, of course, sadly one of the great warnings that needs to be sounded into the ear of every professing Christian single. I wish it didn't have to be said. I wish I could take it for granted that no single Christian would ever have their heart go after an ungodly man or an ungodly woman. That no Christian young person or older single who is getting a little bit desperate, perhaps, would ever consider compromise in this way. That every Christian single would be committed to the reality that “I must only give my heart to a growing, godly man or woman.” You need to realize what God says: you cannot do that and thrive. You can't say to yourself, “Well, how else will they get saved if I don't go out with them?” My friends, God doesn't need you to break his law to save somebody. They'll lead your heart astray. “No it won't.” Yes it will. “No it won't.” Yes it will. God says it will, don't you say that it won't.

Samson presses on. The next case of Samson's careless disregard for his own soul is seen in his lack of zeal for his own purity in regard to his particular identity as a Nazirite. Three events very quickly to bring this out. First of all, I hope that some of you picked this up in the reading: we find there that he goes on his way to Timnah and apparently here in verse 5 of chapter 14, his parents begin the journey with him. Samson apparently says, “I'm going to go a different way, Mom and Dad. I'll meet you there.” And where does he go? He goes to the vineyards of Timnah. Now, somebody might say, “Well, what's the big deal with that?” Let me tell you what the big deal with that is: if there is any passage in the Bible that Samson would have learned from heart it's Numbers 6 and part of Numbers 6 which gives us the law of the Nazirite says this, “he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.” He wasn't to eat it; he wasn't to come close to it. So, you ask the question, here's a guy that is to avoid grapes and everything that has to do with grapes, what in the world is he doing walking through a vineyard?

I thought of a rather silly illustration this morning and that is: most of you probably, even if you've never read a comic book in your life, you know enough about Superman, an all-



American hero. If you picked up a Superman comic book and read there that Superman was going to go to the kryptonite store you'd think to yourself, "What got into Superman?" In all the world, there's one thing he's not supposed to touch. Why would he even get close to it? Why is he placing himself so carelessly in such a tempting position in which he might so clearly and radically disobey God? Now, it doesn't say that he ate any of the grapes but he just wanted to get near them. There are three places Samson should never go: a cemetery, a barbershop and a vineyard. But what is he doing here? Maybe, again, the thought is, "Well, you know, I'm not going to drink anything and I probably won't even eat it but I like the way they look. The smell of a vineyard is hmmm. I love being there." Like some people say, you know, "I can't drink coffee but I love the smell of coffee." Some people say, "I would never smoke but, boy, I love the smell of pipe tobacco," or something like that. "I wouldn't do it but I love the smell." Maybe that's what he's doing, just get in there and have a little look.

It reminds me of some of the stupid things I used to do when I was young. When I was young, I had a fascination with fire and I won't go into any great details but I have basically been cured of my pyromania. But there are two instances in which I very nearly burned down my home and one instance in which I came very close to losing my life. I'll tell this because I only fear telling it...most little kids aren't here so hopefully nobody else will want to do this. I was pouring gasoline on the floor in my garage and throwing matches into it and when the little puddle almost went out, I took the can of gasoline and I thought I'd pour a little bit more on. That flame leapt up, covered the can of gasoline which I promptly dropped and I was able to go and get the hose and squirt it. I'm glad the hose was on. How wise was that? Was that not courting disaster? And yet, I see spiritually speaking, believers doing the same thing all the time. I'm shocked when I find out that single Christians of the opposite sex spend time alone at their houses or in one of their apartments. What in the world are they doing? That's pouring gasoline on the floor and striking matches. Is it wise for a courting couple to be parked out alone in a car at night? Is it wise for them to be engaged in kissing and petting and yet think somehow they'll be kept back from full fornication when, to be fairly graphic, everything in their body is preparing them for sex? Is that not tempting the God who said to beware of even the appearance of evil?

I compare a lot of believers to being spiritual daredevils. You know, daredevils do the stupidest things in the world. There are things I would love to do but I won't do them because I don't want to die that way. I'd love to go hang-gliding. I'd love to jump out of an airplane with a parachute. But I think to myself if I died doing that, it's not that I'd be embarrassed obviously but I think, "What a way to go." If you want to do that but I think what a stupid way to go. That's being a bit of a daredevil. It's not a risk I need to take. And sometimes we are spiritual daredevils when we do things like pump the world's music into our ears and think that our heart won't be affected. I had a guy from one of our sister churches, was having lunch with him one time and I got into his car and he scraps off all of his cds and cassette tapes onto the floor. Of course, he sees me picking one up and looking at it and he tries to make these excuses on how it doesn't really affect him. Of course, I could tell him, "I want you to sing me every song on these cds," and I know he could. He could sing every single one of them by heart. It doesn't really get into you, of

course, right? He started making these humina, humina....I said, "Let me ask you something: what would you think if your pastor had this in his car?" He said, "I'd lose all respect for him." Interesting.

Can we do that and not have us think that way? I've been shocked sometimes because of what I put into my ears and heart largely before I was converted. Stuff I listened to 25 years ago and I can be walking through the mall or something like that and then I find that I'm singing a song. What am I doing? I'm singing this song, maybe a 50s song or a 60s song and I realize that's about fornication, finding my thrill on blueberry hill. What am I singing that for? Why is that in my head? I can dress like the world, date like the world and buy the entertainment of the world and yet remain uncorrupted by the world? Really?

I mentioned yesterday the idea that's been asked a lot of times by young people: how far can I go? That is to say, what is the least level of obedience that I can render to God and yet still call myself a Christian? It's kind of like what I do when these telemarketers call me and I usually don't pick up my phone anymore but when I do and they want to say, "Okay, Jim, can I put you down for \$25-40-50?" I say something like, "Well, how about \$5?" It's not even on their list but I think they'll at least maybe appreciate that. What's the least level? Does God allow to give a \$25 donation? I'll check that or maybe what I'll do is put \$5 down. How much can I be like my non-Christian friend, strive for popularity and not be disciplined by the church? How close to the edge can I go? How far into the vineyard can I be? Can't I get the great catalogue and look at pictures of grapes on my wall and get a scratch-n-sniff book about grapes and about wine and get real close to it? Can't I do that? God says: don't touch the seed, don't touch the skin.

Secondly and more briefly: he takes honey out of the lion. Wow, wasn't that cool! He killed a lion and now he goes and he takes all of this honey out of it. Well, yeah, maybe somebody says that's pretty cool but listen to what the word of God says: you see, the word of God said that if any Israelite touched the carcass of an animal like that that they were unclean. Listen to what it says here in Leviticus 11:24, "By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening; whoever carries part of the carcass," he picks it up and carries it to his father and mother, "shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening: The carcass of any animal which divides the foot..." Verse 27, listen to what it says, "And whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go on all fours, those are unclean to you. Whoever touches any such carcass shall be unclean until evening." Can you think of anything that goes around on all fours on paws? Yeah, a lion. God says don't touch the carcass of a lion because you shall be unclean but, again, that's true for any Israelite but it was particularly true for a Nazirite. You're not to touch the dead. And you see a progression: he first of all flirts with breaking his vows, gets around the grapes; now he actually breaks his vow. You're not to touch the dead but he does it and not just then, can you think of another instance? The Philistine army comes out and what does he grab? Not a stick, not a club, not a rock but somebody's donkey that died and the flies are swarming around it, buzzing around and he can reach into that thing while it's still all moist and gooey and pull out the

jawbone. It's the carcass of a dead animal that no Israelite is to touch and particularly no Nazirite is to touch.

Another example of Samson's careless disregard for his own soul is his carnal boasting found in his God-given strength and I've already alluded to this. It is there in chapter 15 when he kills 1,000 men with the jawbone of a donkey and what do we read there in verse 16? "Then Samson said, With a jawbone of a donkey heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey, I have slain 1,000 men. Look at me. Man, look at that. I couldn't tell everybody about the lion," because he probably didn't want to admit that he'd been in a vineyard so he didn't tell anybody about the lion he killed, he couldn't brag about that. I'm sure he would have loved to but now when he kills 1,000 men, he sings a little song about himself and having been guilty of the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh, it ought not to surprise us to see Samson falling before what John calls "the boastful pride of life."

But now we see another instance and that is Samson's sad determination to engage in sexual immorality and that's in chapter 16 where we find that he actually goes and gives himself to a prostitute. Pastor Donnelly mentioned that last night in regard to our own union with Christ. The Bible tells us that no immoral man or woman has eternal life. We know from the word of God that we ought not to be deceived that fornicators and adulterers will be judged of God. Ephesians 5 tells us that sexual sins in particular are aggravating to God and that they are the cause for the wrath of God being poured out on the sons of disobedience. At some point here, here's Samson, a strong, virile man and getting close perhaps now to being 35 years old and he doesn't have a wife and he begins to have these sexual longings. Rather than mortifying them and asking God to help him, he goes from lust being conceived to the fantasies knowing that there are women out there that if he gives a little bit of money to, he'll be able to satisfy his lust. And he knows where to find such a woman, he puts enough money in his pocket and he makes his way to her house and he actually goes and beds her. It's like the fool of Proverbs ensnared by his own lust heading off to the pit from which a man does not escape. Here is the sin, as we'll see a little bit later on, that has slain its thousands and tens of thousands. It is a sin which has brought untold grief to the church of Jesus Christ as these sins of sexual impurity have been foolishly embraced by some who have not kept diligence over their heart.

Finally and very quickly here: his relationship with that wicked woman, Delilah, the woman who will prove his downfall. Obviously, I think we can say she is a beautiful woman and the lust of the eyes and the passions of the flesh are once again driving this man and rather than seeing her for what she is, that is a ring of gold in a pig's snout, he determines, "Man, she's going to be the one for me."

Well, that's his disregard for his own soul and now I'm sure you're all wondering, "Well, didn't you say you thought this guy was a Christian?" Well, let me now bring out God's intervention. At every point along the way God meets him. At every point along the way God intervenes with him and seeks him out in the midst of his sin. He does it first of all by way of counsel and rebuke. Samson says, "Hey, there's this beautiful girl down in

Timna, Mom and Dad, I want to have her.” And what do they do? Well, they give counsel and rebuke. They say to him, “Are there no women from among the daughters of your brethren? Why do you have a heart for the uncircumcised Philistines?” Though his parents don't do all that they ought to do, at least there is a word of warning here. They do not say, “Fine, son, whatever you want.” They remind him, albeit weakly, that he must not set his heart upon a woman of the ungodly ones but a woman rather from his own people.

Again, although this is relatively weak, we must say that here is a blessing that we must be careful not to refuse and let us be thankful whenever it is that someone comes and challenges us and questions us in love for our own souls. And they come and we say, “Hey, I’m thinking about doing this,” and they say, “Brother, sister, what about this? Is that really what you want to be doing? Are you not to be going this way?” We ought to be thankful when they do that. But as we'll see, Samson is going to persist anyway.

Then what happens to him as he goes to the vineyard? I mean, there he is, right, taking it in and maybe it is, maybe just as he's reaching out his hand for a grape, what happens? A lion jumps on him. I mean, of all things. A lion jumps on him. A few months ago, I had a van that was not working and I was going to try to do some work on it which, of course, is humorous in and of itself but I hadn't driven it for 5-6 days and I opened up the hood and I was amazed to see a stick in my engine. I thought, “What in the world is that doing in there?” So, I pulled it out and I’m looking at this tree above and I’m trying to think how that branch fell down and somehow bounced under my van and went up underneath, such is my way of thinking. Then I look over underneath where the battery is and there are a bunch of leaves in there. I thought, “That's strange,” and I stick my hand in there and a possum attacks me. You talk about shocking. I was not expecting to be bitten that day by a wild animal.

Here's Samson out there, maybe just out to stick his hand somewhere and a lion jumps out. A lot more exciting than what happened to me. Why was that lion there? God brought that lion there. God is saying, “I'm not going to let you touch it. You're being tempted. You're in a place where you ought not to be,” and God sends a roaring lion to stop him. I guarantee you, he left all thoughts of the grapes.

Then what happens in regard to the time when he wants to marry this woman? He wants to have her for his wife and he actually contracts the marriage and they're having the wedding feast and it's difficult to tell, most likely, he has not yet consummated the marriage. And what does God do? God arranges a couple of things to happen. First of all, he provokes an attack with the Philistines but he does so in such a way that Samson gets disgusted with his wife and he walks out before she has a chance to lead his heart astray. Because Deuteronomy 7 tells us that if he'd stayed in that home, he would have become an idolater and God forces him out. God makes sure that he's not able to be with that woman.

What happens to Samson as well when he engages in his sinful boasting about what he did with the jawbone of a donkey? “I've killed a thousand men.” The next verse tells us

then he became very thirsty and he cried out to God and said, now listen to the language, “You have given this great deliverance by the hand of your servant and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” God says, “Alright, braggart, tough guy, Mr. Mighty, do you think you did that in and of your strength? I'm going to send a little bit of thirst to you.” And now he thinks he's going to die. Singing a song about himself one moment but now he realizes his weakness and now he says, “Oh yeah, that's right, you brought this deliverance by the hand of your servant.” You know, there's nothing like a little bodily weakness to show how frail we are and how dependent we are upon God. “I will go out and do this.” Oh really, let me do a little something to your Achilles's tendon. Let me pinch your nerve in your back a little bit and let's see how much you can do.

When Samson goes to visit the prostitute what happens? Is it a peaceful, easy, pleasant bit of sinful transaction that he indulges in? Is he able to slip away from that unnoticed? God allows his enemies to come upon him. It serves a twofold purpose: it highlights Samson's action as a judge but I believe it also serves as a warning to him. Years ago, there was a man in my church who called me one night after he had been in a car accident. He was driving out west somewhere and was coming back and he had a car accident and he called to tell me about it. He was asking for advice about it. Some time later, he confessed to me that that car accident happened as he was leaving a strip club. No doubt his conscience was screaming at him and God did not allow that to be an easy, pleasant bit of sin. What if that had just gone smoothly as can be? If he was able to drive out and think, “Well, no lightning bolts. Nothing going wrong. Everything seems to go smooth. I mean, God must have been okay with that.”

Then what happens as he goes to this woman, Delilah? Over and over again, this woman is shown for what she is. The truth of her intentions are rather easily made known. The knowledge that she is seeking the source of his strength in order to destroy him by the Philistines is revealed not once, not twice but three and four times. God publishes it before his eyes. “Samson, get out! Wake up! Why is she tying you up? Why is she weaving the seven locks of your hair? It's because she's a thief and a robber. Get out! Flee! These lusts of yours will destroy you.” Friends, can you not – perhaps some of you give very eloquent testimony to such incidents in your own lives, times when you've contemplated sinning or actually were in sin and God met you. God set up roadblocks. God gave warnings. You're about to go here and the lion comes out. You're about to go here and God makes you weak. You get into this relationship and that guy's intentions are very soon revealed and you realize Dad was right, he really is only after one thing, girls. These things are pointed reminders that God is there to hedge his people up.

In regard to his sensual sins, his sin with the prostitute and with Delilah, has not God given clarity and cause for any man in particular who has thoughts like this going on in your mind? Pastor Donnelly talked last night about the many things that will keep a man from adultery. Let me read you a passage that helps me tremendously. Proverbs 7:21, “With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.” That sounds like fun, doesn't it? “Till an arrow struck his liver.

As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life.” But I know it. “Now therefore, listen to me, my children; Pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths; For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men.” Well, I’m a weak man. “Her house is the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death.” And maybe there is a man here today who has been contemplating going down that pathway. You’re going to have an arrow in your liver, man, and you may well end up in hell. Do you want to do that? There have been strong men slain by that sin. Are you better than they?

What is that? That is a warning. You begin to have that lustful thought, you begin to think about this and God is saying, “Whoa, man, listen, listen, listen! She’s weaving your hairlocks. She’s tying new strings around you so that she can deliver you to the Philistines. Wake up! Get out!” That’s what God is saying. God is screaming to us at times. “Don’t click on that website! Don’t stare at that section of the sport’s page! Don’t flip through that magazine! Don’t flirt with that woman at the office who makes you feel young and vigorous! Don’t get into that chat room! Don’t start there with that innocent little banter with that person of the opposite sex!” God is warning you, is he not? “Stop! Stop! Stop!”

Bless God for those times. Bless God maybe for those times you were contemplating doing something and he very graciously intervened. I remember coming upon a professing Christian man one time at a mall, at Waldenbooks, at the magazine rack, a Playboy magazine in his hand. You want to see a guy spin around fast when I touched him on the shoulder? I doubt he ever did that again. A few years ago, I was in the Detroit airport and my wife will find this particularly funny because she makes fun of my urge to read. I’m looking at the phonebook. I’m in Detroit and a woman from my church walks up. Thank you, Lord, that I’ve got a stupid phonebook in my hand and that I’m not thinking to myself, “Who would know?” None of these people know who I am. I could slip my little ring off my finger and stick it in my pocket and maybe they’ll think I’m a single man. Bless God for the lions in the vineyard. Bless God for the parching thirst. Bless God for the warnings he sends.

Now, very quickly, here’s Samson’s persistence. One of the texts that most points out to me the hardness of the human heart is found in Proverbs 6 and the context is of one being ensnared in adultery. It speaks to a person and we’ll talk about this more tomorrow, it speaks of the person who thinks that they can flirt with certain things and not be destroyed. You see again the idea that, “Well, it’s only a friendship. It’s only a movie. I’m only looking. I’m not going to touch. I’m only in this chat room to see what’s going on,” or the idea that some idiot has and I don’t believe them if they’ve said this, “Well, I need to click on those sites or read those magazines or how else will I minister to people in that sin if I don’t know what that sin is like? Or I’ll get into this relationship and win them to the Lord.” The Holy Spirit says in Proverbs 6:27 these rhetorical questions, “Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared?” Do you think you can go through roadblock after roadblock after roadblock without consequences? The idea, you know, “that railing is here for my safety but I can get closer to the edge than that. I mean, I don’t know why they put up at the

Grand Canyon, that railing might be 5-10 feet away from the edge. Why do I have to stay back that far? I can lean over that and not fall. It's no fun here. I like to live on the edge.”

Maybe Samson had begun to think, “You know, it's amazing, God always intervenes. I act stupid all the time and God turns it around for good. I mean, God blessed that whole thing when I touched that lion. It didn't turn out so bad. I wound up beginning my ministry as a judge and this happened and that happened. It wasn't so bad. I wanted to see that prostitute but look what I did with the gates of the city. That was pretty cool. I pursued my sin and God was always there to stop me and whenever he chastized me it was rather quick and over so perhaps I can take this fire to my chest and not be burned. Maybe I can walk on these hot coals and not be seared. Maybe I really can begin a friendship with this woman at church or at the office and it really won't affect my marriage. I really can give my heart to the unconverted and not have it affect my relationship with the Lord. In fact, you know it's a funny thing, after I went out on that date with someone though my conscience bothered me, I had the best quiet time I had in a long time. It was after I saw that dirty movie that I preached one of my best sermons. You know, my attachment to pornography reminds me of how dependent I am on Jesus so it's really not that bad. So I can watch whatever I want on tv, I can flip through the Sports Illustrated edition, I can listen to the rock-n-roll and it won't make me like the world. It doesn't make me love the world. It doesn't desensitize me to sin. It hasn't really weakened my conscience.” Really? What are you made of? Something far stronger than I.

Samson refused to learn. The goodness of God did not lead him to lasting repentance. He didn't step back from the edge and think, “Whoa, Lord. Thank you! Thank you when I was in the vineyard, the lion came. Lord, I'll never go to a vineyard again. What was I thinking? God, thank you when I left the house of that prostitute that my enemies were waiting for me to destroy me so that I'll think to myself if I ever want to put money in my pocket and go there again, my enemies might destroy me this time. Lord, thank you that Delilah wove my hair into that loom so that I could think about what she was and get out of there before it was too late.”

I preached some weeks ago back home on the life of King Jehoahaz from 2 Kings 13 and here was a man that brought judgment upon his nation. We read there that the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel and they were delivered into the hands of their enemies and then we read that the king cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard them and sent a deliverer and the next verse says, “Nevertheless, they continued in their sin.” Nevertheless, Samson goes and picks this up and picks that up. Nevertheless, he refuses to see this door as the door of destruction. Or perhaps, again, he thinks God will intervene. “God is not going to allow me to fall. I'm his child. I'm his chosen one. I'm a deliverer. I can do these things because I am strong enough. I can sin and sin and sin and sin and sin and always presume upon God to snap me back at the last minute.”

Well, that delusion brings us very quickly now and I want to take about three minutes, to Samson's ruin. Again, you're aware of this. Chapter 16, Samson is worn down with Delilah's persistence. He speaks the truth and tells her where the source of his strength is,

that it is because he is dedicated to God. Verse 17, “No razor has ever come upon my head for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb.” How did he say that and not leave? How did he say that and remind himself of what he was? Again, it would be like a preacher being in the room with some prostitute and his pocket New Testament falls out and she says, “What's that?” and he says, “Well, you see, I'm a pastor and I preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.” That man ought to then say, “And what in the world am I doing here? Forgive me for contemplating sinning against you.” And maybe seek if he has enough in him to be able to with tears speak the gospel to her.

Samson is able to say that and then reveal the secret about how he can become like any other man but perhaps he's begun to think, “You know, maybe I touched the dead and I was still strong, I went to the vineyard and I was still strong, maybe I don't really need my hair after all. Maybe I can do this again and not suffer the consequences of my folly.” But he finds here that the Spirit is grieved and quenched and withdrawn. The net that he thought would always be there every time he fell, there was the net, there was the net, there was the net. Now he finds it's not there and now his chest is burned and his feet are seared. Samson, the mighty warrior for God, now finds that the Spirit of God has left him. As we're going to see more fully in the days ahead, he becomes a cause for the blasphemy of God's enemies and they begin to boast in the power of their god and it is then as a blinded grinder at the wheel that Samson, as we're going to see, finally begins to realize the world is what it is, that it didn't want to be his friend, it didn't want to coddle him and love him and hold him. It wanted to destroy him.

Some of you, I trust, know what it is to have a bad example have a profound influence on you. I know at least one person here that won't get into an airplane because of a loved one that was killed in a small plane. Some of you may have been in an accident in which you saw someone sail through the windshield of a car and now you won't even start the car until everyone has their seatbelt on. Or perhaps you had brush with drowning and now you won't get into a boat. My friends, that's what this example is to do for us, to say, “Lord, you know what? I've been hot-dogging it with the world. I've been flirting with disaster believing I could hold fire to my chest and not get burned.” My friends, don't we see enough wrecks in our Bibles to show us otherwise? Haven't we seen enough wrecks in our churches? Is not even this conference perhaps a silent, eloquent testimony to us as we think about some who are not here, that we cannot walk upon coals and not have our feet seared? Maybe up until this time your feet haven't been blistered. Maybe the fire has not yet burned you but, my friend, don't take that as your opportunity to keep hugging it. Drop it now. See it as an encouragement that the mercy of God is there for you now and may the goodness of God lead us all to repentance.

Let's pray.

*Our Father, we pray that you will take the sobering lessons of the life of Samson and write them large upon our hearts. Father, forgive us for our careless traipsing through the vineyards of the world. O living God, thank you for the lions you have sent in the past. But, God, may we not put our trust in that but may we walk on the other side, in the*



*path of safety and obedience to Jesus, girt about with the armor of God. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*